SYNOPSIS

ON

A Comprehensive Study of Santhal Traditional Textiles and the Socio-Economic Condition of Weavers.

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State of the Art

The Santhal community, one of the largest tribal groups in India, possesses a rich and vibrant cultural heritage deeply woven into its traditional textiles. These textiles are not merely garments but living expressions of identity, rituals, and ancestral knowledge passed down through generations. Rooted in nature and everyday life, Santhali weaving is characterized by its unique motifs, earthy colors, and handcrafted techniques, often carried out by men & women both within the community. Each thread tells a story—of the weaver, the land, and the community's values. This study explores the cultural significance, traditional techniques, and evolving role of Santhali textiles in both daily life and ceremonial practices, while also examining the challenges faced by weavers and the efforts to preserve this rich heritage in the face of modernity.

Literature Review

Sadanandam (2016) The research highlights several issues faced by weavers, including insufficient funding, lack of modern machinery, poor working conditions, low wages, and limited government support.

Shoaib (2016) The study focused on the various types of information required by weavers, including details about raw materials, access to capital, market trends, and intellectual property rights (IPR).

Roy and Chauhan (2017) The study found that most positions in the weaving industry are occupied by men with limited educational backgrounds. The sector faces numerous challenges, such as lack of capital for modern machinery, poor working conditions, declining wages, increasing yarn costs, insufficient government support, and a stagnant domestic market. Additionally, the ineffective implementation of development schemes often prevents resources from reaching those who need them most. Therefore, it is essential to plan and execute policies more efficiently to ensure that local communities can fully benefit from available support and services.

Chand and Gere's (2017) The study found that handloom products are in high demand in both domestic and international markets. However, despite working independently, many weavers lack a professional business approach. The findings also revealed that weavers have limited knowledge of modern design trends, production techniques, and marketing strategies, which hinders their growth and competitiveness in the broader market.

Gundeti (2018) The study found that Khadi weavers are not receiving minimum wages. It highlighted several pressing issues, including harsh working conditions, extended working hours, low income, and the lack of social security for the weavers. However, the article

concludes with recommendations and strategies aimed at improving the conditions of Khadi handloom weavers.

Singh (2018) Santhal women have increasingly adopted the green taant saree (khadi cotton), often adorned with animal and plant motifs, which has now become a symbolic representation of their community. Despite evolving trends, the traditional white saree with a red border continues to be worn during various cultural functions. While Santhal women still proudly wear their traditional attire on special occasions, elements such as designs, motifs, colors, fibers, and draping styles have gradually changed over time.

This evolution highlights the urgent need to document and preserve the traditional costume of the Santhal community, ensuring that the knowledge of their rich cultural heritage—of which attire forms an essential part—is not lost to modernization and time.

Sivasubramanian and Rajendran (2020) Delve into the challenging working, living, and health conditions faced by home-based labourers in urban areas. It was found that handloom workers often operate directly from their homes, which serve as both living and working spaces. These homes become the center of all activities related to handloom cloth production.

Majeed et al., (2020) A study was conducted to investigate the social and economic conditions, challenges, and issues faced by carpet weavers in the Pulwama region of Jammu and Kashmir. The findings revealed that the overall status of the weavers is poor, as they lack proper education, suffer from health issues, receive low wages, get insufficient support from government schemes, and are often exploited by middlemen or master weavers.

Chatterjee and Jain (2020) It was revealed that the quality of life and standard of living among weaver households in the surveyed areas were insufficient. The study exposed the poor socio-economic conditions faced by the Kota Doria handloom weavers, as well as the ineffectiveness of several government schemes intended to support them in earning additional income.

Bagale and Mahajan (2022) Studies have shown that nearly all handloom weavers suffer from some form of occupational health issue. These health problems have led to a notable decline in their productivity. Overall, handloom workers are found to be in a vulnerable social, economic, and health condition, making their livelihood increasingly unstable.

Ahmed and Sheereen (2022) The study revealed that the proportion of female workers is significantly lower than that of male workers. In rural areas, the majority of laborers live in kutcha (temporary) houses, whereas pucca and semi-pucca dwellings are more common in urban settings. It was also found that 97.3% of handloom workers reside in rural areas, with most of them owning their homes.

Gill (2025) In the Santhal community, textiles—referred to as lugli in the Santhali language—hold profound cultural and symbolic importance, accompanying individuals through every major life event, from birth to death. The tradition begins at childbirth, where a newborn is first handed to the mother using a leaf from the Atnah tree (Terminalia elliptica),

revered for its medicinal properties. Soon after, the mother, father, and infant are presented with textiles by relatives and community members, representing collective joy and blessing.

Textiles also play a central role in wedding ceremonies, where specific garments are exchanged and worn, each carrying distinct symbolic meanings and functions within the rituals. In death, these customs continue with equal reverence—new textile pieces are exchanged among family and relatives at the cremation ground, honoring the deceased and reaffirming cultural continuity and respect for tradition.

Problem to be investigated

The aim of this proposed doctoral research is to conduct a study on **the traditional textile of the Santhal community; to analyze socio-economic conditons and challenges faced by weavers in sustaining their craft: and to understand the cultural significance of these textiles in daily and ceremonial life of Santhal Society.**

Motivation

The Santhal community, one of the largest tribal groups in India, possesses a rich tradition of textile art that reflects their unique cultural identity, connection to nature, and ancestral knowledge. However, with rapid modernization, declining interest among younger generations, lack of proper documentation, and limited market access, this heritage is at risk of fading away. Moreover, the weavers—often working under challenging socio-economic conditions—face issues such as poor income, lack of institutional support, and exploitation by intermediaries. This situation highlights an urgent need to document their practices, understand their realities, and support their livelihoods.

This research motivates that traditional knowledge systems, like those of the Santhal textile weavers, hold immense cultural, artistic, and economic value.

Objectives of the Investigation

1. To study the impact of modernization and market demands on traditional Santhali textile.
2. To analyze the socio-economic status of weavers.
3. To identify the challenges faced by weavers in sustaining their traditional craft.
4. To study the role of Santhali textiles in cultural expressions, rituals, festivals and daily life.

Research Questions

1. What are the impact of modernization and market demand on Santhali textiles ?
2. What are the socio-economic status of weavers to sustain their craft?
3. What are the challenges faced by weavers of jamshedpur, Chaibasa, Dumka and Mayurbhanj district?
4. What is the cultural significance of traditional textiles in Santhal society, and what role do they play in daily and ceremonial life?

Research Design & Methodology

Research Design

The research design would be an Exploratory Research. It ia a research used to investigate a problem which is not clearly defined. It is conducted to have a better understanding of the existing research problem, but will not provide conclusive result. This research also carry qualitative and quantitative research.

Area of Research

The present research would be limited to the Jharkhand and Orissa. In which Jamshedpur, Chaibasa, Dumka, Mayurbhanj all these districts are included.

Method of Sampling

Sampling will be based on purposively sampling, which refers to a group of non- probability sampling technique in which units are selected because they have characteristics that is required in the sample.

Sample size & selection

Total 200 respondents will be selected from the Jamshedpur, Chaibasa, Dumka, Mayurbhanj district. There will be 50 responses from weavers of each district. Both male and female weavers would be selected purposively along with 10 retailer from 2 each district will be interviewed.

Variables

- **Independent Variables:** age, gender, work time, capacity of earning, yearly income, raw material, product design, education qualification, government awareness, schemes, policy and training.
- **Dependent Variables:** Socio-economic status, skill, heritage.

Research Tool

The main tools for data collection are the observation and interview schedules. The data collection will be based on these primary method:

- Field study- identification of the Communities, Male and Female ratio, Education, Skill, Socio economic and livelihood Status
- Observation
- Interview Schedule

Source of Data

In this research, the study will be carried out on a Primary data and Secondary data collection.

Significance of the Study

This research holds substantial significance in documenting and preserving the rich textile traditions of the Santhal community, which represent not only artistic expression but also a vital component of their cultural identity and social structure. By exploring the cultural, artistic, and socio-economic dimensions of Santhal textiles, the study aims to bring attention to the intricate craftsmanship, symbolism, and traditional knowledge embedded in these weaves.

Ultimately, this study aspires to bridge the gap between tradition and innovation, ensuring that the legacy of Santhai textile weaving continues to thrive for future generations.

Relevance of the study

The proposed research is highly relevant in the current context of growing awareness about indigenous knowledge systems, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. The Santhal community's textile traditions are a reflection of their deep-rooted heritage, identity, and social values. However, these practices face increasing threats due to industrialization, lack of market access, and diminishing interest among younger generations.

By investigating the cultural, artistic, and socio-economic significance of Santhal textiles, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of how traditional crafts shape community life and identity. The findings will be valuable not only for academic scholarship but also for cultural institutions working towards inclusive development, heritage conservation, and the empowerment of tribal communities.

Contribution to Existing Knowledge

This doctoral research will contribute significantly to the limited academic literature on the traditional textiles of the Santhal community—an area that remains underexplored in mainstream textile and cultural studies. While there is growing interest in indigenous crafts, much of the existing research has focused on more widely recognized weaving traditions, leaving a gap in the documentation and understanding of weaving practices.

By examining the cultural, artistic, and socio-economic dimensions of Santhal textiles, this study will offer a holistic perspective on how these fabrics are interwoven with the community's identity, daily life, and rituals. It will serve as a resource for future research and as a foundation for developing inclusive strategies that respect and sustain indigenous textile traditions.

Future Work

Building upon the findings of this doctoral research, future work can explore several key areas to further support and sustain the traditional textile practices of the Santhal community. One potential direction is the development of design intervention programs that blend traditional Santhali motifs with contemporary aesthetics to enhance marketability while preserving cultural authenticity.

Further studies could also focus on technology integration, such as digital documentation of weaving techniques and virtual storytelling platforms that showcase the weavers' narratives and craftsmanship.

Additionally, comparative studies between the Santhal textile tradition and those of other indigenous groups may help in creating a broader framework for tribal textile preservation across India and beyond. Collaborations with fashion institutes, museums could also be explored to scale impact and raise global awareness of Santhal textile heritage.

Chapterization

- Introduction
- Review of Literature
- Research Methodology
- Results and Discussion
- Summary and Conclusion

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